

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SNM-02 SS-15 PM-03 EB-07 MC-02 SP-02

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9401

S E C R E T RANGOON 0877

STADIS//////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI MASS BM

SUBJ: PROPOSED BURMESE PURCHASE OF ARMORED CARS

REF: A. STATE 074990

B. RANGOON 0832

C. STATE 071923

D. RANGOON 210

1. IT WAS MY INTENT IN REF B TO CALL ATTENTION TO THE RISK THAT THE GUB MIGHT, IN REACTION TO THE DEMARCHE PROPOSED IN REF C, BECOM LESS AMENABLE TO SUCH SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS IN US/GUB ANTI-NARCOTICS COOPERATION AS THE STATIONING OF A DEA AGENT IN RANGOON AND THE TECHNICAL EXPERT'S VISIT, BOTH OF WHICH WERE DISCUSSED BY AMBASSADOR VANCE AND ME WITH COLONEL TIN OO. IT WAS NOT MY INTENT TO SUGGEST (NOR, TAKEN IN CONTEXT, DOES REF B SEEM TO ME TO SUGGEST) THAT THE DEPARTMENT'S PROPOSED DEMARCHE WOULD CAUSE THE BURMESE TO CEASE ALL COOPERATION IN THE NARCOTICS CONTROL FIELD, INCLUDING THOSE ACTIVITIES OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO THEMSELVES.

2. WE WOULD OF COURSE NOT EXPECT THE GUB TO REACT BY REFUSING TO ACCEPT OUR HELICOPTERS, OR BY REJECTING SPECIFIC INTELLIGENCE INFORMATION OF USE TO THEM IN THEIR CAMPAIGNS AGAINST OPIUM-TRAFFICKING INSURGENTS. HOWEVER, THE ASSIGNMENT OF A DEA AGENT TO RANGOON IS NOT SOMETHING THE GUB WOULD NORMALLY VIEW AS DESIRABLE

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FOR ITS OWN SAKE. AND, SO FAR AS THE EXPERTS VISIT IS CONCERNED,

WHILE IT MIGHT WELL BE OF BENEFIT TO THE GUB, THE BENEFIT WOULD IN BURMESE EYES BE SMALL ENOUGH THAT IT WOULD NOT NECESSARILY OVER-RIDE THE PSYCHOLOGICAL RESISTANCE WHICH (WE FEEL) THE ARMORED CAR LICENSE DENIAL MIGHT AROUSE. AND EVEN IF THE VISIT DID MATERIALIZE IN SPITE OF THE DENIAL, THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE OF THE VISIT COULD BE WORSENER, WITH SOME POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO THE PROSPECTS FOR CLOSER COOPERATION GROWING OUT OF THE VISIT.

3. ADMITTEDLY, OPINIONS MAY LEGITIMATELY DIFFER AS TO THE IMPORTANCE TO BE ATTACHED TO THE IMPACT OF THE LICENSE DENIAL DECISION UPON THE PROBABILITY OF GETTING A DEA MAN ASSIGNED TO RANGOON OR THE PROBABILITY OF A SUCCESSFUL AND PRODUCTIVE EXPERT'S VISIT. I DO NOT ATTACH OVERWHELMING IMPORTANCE TO IT. HOWEVER, AGAIN IN THE CONTEXT OF REF B, IF WE START FROM THE ACKNOWLEDGED FACT THAT THE LICENSE-DENIAL DECISION WAS "FAIRLY CLOSELY BALANCED", IT SHOULD NOT REQUIRE A CONSIDERATION OF OVERWHELMING IMPORTANCE TO TIP THE BALANCE THE OTHER WAY.

4. REGARDING PARA 3 REF A, THE DEPARTMENT'S DECISION AS CONVEYED TO US IN REF C WOULD HAVE HAD US GO TO THE GUB AND SAY WE DID NOT CONSIDER IT APPROPRIATE TO SELL THEM THE CARS. AN APPROVAL OF THE LICENSE WOULD APPARENTLY NOT HAVE BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY ANY SUCH DEMARCHE. THIS DIFFERENCE IMPARTS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE OF NUANCE. HOWEVER, I WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST THAT DEBATE OVER SUCH NUANCES AT THIS STAGE IS SOMEWHAT BESIDE THE MAIN POINT. WE MADE OUR INITIAL RECOMMENDATION (REF D), A FAIRLY CLOSELY BALANCED ONE, IN FAVOR OF APPROVAL OF THE LICENSE, AFTER DUE CONSIDERATION, INTER ALIA, OF THE ASPECTS DEALT WITH IN PARA 3 REF A. THE DEPARTMENT LIKEWISE REACHED ITS DECISION, AGAIN A FAIRLY CLOSELY BALANCED ONE, IN FAVOR OF DENIAL, AFTER DUE CONSIDERATION OF THE SAME ASPECTS. THEN SOME NEW CONSIDERATIONS CAME TO THE FORE, IN THE FORM OF THE DEVELOPMENTS REPORTED IN RANGOON'S 0800 (TIN OO, VANCE, OSBORN CONVERSATION*. IX ME DENIAL DECISION WAS INDEED CLOSELY BALANCED, THEN IT STANDS TO REASON THAT THESE NEW CONSIDERATIONS MIGHT HAVE TIPPED THE BALANCE TOWARD APPROVAL. OSBORN

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